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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR(DICARLO), EUR/SCE(FOOKS/STINCHCOMB); NSC
FOR BRAUN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2017

TAGS: [BK](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: BOSNIA: RS PUBLIC OPINION SOLIDLY BEHIND DODIK

REF: SARAJEVO 2267

Classified By: Ambassador Charles English. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) RS media outlets overwhelmingly support PM Milorad Dodik and echo his opposition to the announced OHR Bonn Powers impositions. Predictably, under these circumstances, RS public opinion increasingly echoes now familiar SNSD assertions that the High Representative has put Serbs at risk and is demonstrating the international community's determination to abolish the RS. These views are amplified by nationalist NGO's such as the members of SPONA, who now plan to take next week's protest to the doorstep of OHR in Sarajevo (ref A). This environment has stoked worries among an already nervous Bosniak returnee communities. End Summary.

RS Media Backs Dodik

¶2. (SBU) RS-based media outlets, almost without exception, strongly support PM Dodik, and have begun to employ increasingly alarmist language and formats. Media outlets ranging from government owned daily Glas Srpske to RS public broadcaster RTRS and private dailies Nezavisne Novine and Fokus all share a clearly pro-Dodik and anti-OHR outlook. RTRS has focused on characterizing the situation as a crisis highlighting the unity of the RS politicians in their rejection of the decision. Nezavisne Novine has devoted considerable coverage to the "damaging effects" of the OHR measures. Glas Srpske has concentrated on stories evoking RS and pan-Serb unity. The tabloid Fokus has joined the propaganda bandwagon printing outrageous accusations against the High Representative and OHR.

Civil Society

¶3. (C) Civil society opinion has been dominated by the rhetoric of SPONA, the umbrella organization of nationalist NGOs. In addition to previously announced plans to hold demonstrations around the RS on October 29, the organization added that its members will now travel to Sarajevo to protest in front of OHR (ref A). SPONA President Branislav Dukic, who was formerly involved with establishing wartime the Republic of Knin, has deployed increasingly irresponsible rhetoric making growing references to bloodshed and calls to

arms.

¶4. (C) Even normally responsible RS interlocutors such as Branko Todorovic, RS Helsinki Committee for Human Rights President and longtime mission contact have characterized the OHR measures as "not understandable." Todorovic who has long been a constructive and apolitical voice in the RS has now inexplicably adopted the SNSD position and stated it is "time not only to transform, but to completely abolish the role of the High Representative and OHR."

Returnees Concerned

¶5. (C) Zvornik returnee community leader Salih Kapidzic told us that the most frequent topic of discussion among Bosniaks in Zvornik is speculation whether armed conflict ill start again. He added that RS Bosniaks regularly watch a number of Serbian TV and PM Kostunica,s recent statements on the RS and Kosovo have stoked their fears. However, returnee contacts in Prijedor and Srebrenica downplayed the developments and stated returnees were carrying on with their normal lives with the usual level of disgust with national political leaders.

Public Opinion on Dodik's Side

¶6. (SBU) In this environment it is not surprising that public opinion in the RS is overwhelmingly opposed to the High Representative and his measures. The general outlook of Bosnian Serbs in the RS is captured by today's headline on the RS government daily Glas Srpske reading "No More Deceits." An informal survey of a range of RS Serb views disclosed a widespread belief that the time for OHR removals and impositions is past, and that Bosnia must now conduct its own affairs. Serbs do not view political gridlock or Dodik's intransigence as a legitimate reason for OHR impositions which they characterize as violations of their democratic rights. Many Srerb commentators are claiming that RS Serbs are under threat and that the OHR measures are part of an international community attempt to abolish the RS. RS Serbs complain that they are the primary international community targets by the IC, and question why Bosniak leaders are not punished for what they see as anti-Dayton behavior.

Comment

¶7. (C) RS public opinion is shaped by the near total SNSD monopoly on information outlets. It is notable that the comments of ostensibly private observers are increasingly resembling talking points used by Dodik and SNSD. We do not believe that Dodik is promoting this environment with the goal of fomenting violence but rather to bolster his standing in his face off with the international community. Nonetheless, this strategy allows Dodik very little cover to walk back from confrontation and creates an environment that could result in unanticipated incidents. End Comment.
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